

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 14TH JANUARY, 2020 at 4.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Turner in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Blackett, M. Dixon, Fagan, Foster, Jackson, Jenkins, Marshall, Taylor and Thornton.

Also in attendance:-

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Ms Marion Dixon, Acting Assistant Director of Housing Services, Sunderland City Council

Ms Louise Sloan, Strategic Plans and Housing Manager, Sunderland City Council

Mr Gary Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2019

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December, 2019 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December, 2019 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

**Reference from Cabinet – 14 January 2020
Feed and Food Controls Service Plan 2019/2020**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the views of the Committee on a report considered by Cabinet on the 14 January 2020 which presented the Feed and Food Controls Service Plan for

2019/2020 to be used by the Feed and Food Safety Enforcement Service across the city which had been formulated to comply with the current recommendations of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement and outlined the national priorities and standards for service delivery.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Marion Dixon, Acting Assistant Director of Housing Services presented the report, highlighting the key points arising and addressing questions and comments thereon.

Councillor Blackburn queried if the four premises that had been closed had been visited recently. Ms Dixon advised that one premise had been closed as a consequence from a report of the member of public and the others had been visited previously in requirement with the Food Standards Agency.

In response to Councillor Blackburn's query in relation to paragraph 2.4.1 of the report and if the Approved Premises were visited more often, Ms Dixon advised that this was correct, and they were required to visit the premises every six months to a year.

Councillor Marshall highlighted the Services move to a new IT system and the issues faced with downloading information from the old to new system and how long this would take to resolve. Ms Dixon informed the Committee that historically they had utilised a bespoke system but unfortunately this could not be supported any longer and the decision was made to move to an "off the shelf" system. A programme was in place to transition data from one system to the other and there were instances where some data had slipped as the systems were not identical. This created a few problems in terms of reporting and training issues with staff etc,

Ms Dixon advised that she was confident that they have the quality control checks in now and it was just about catching up with the work.

In relation to Councillor Thornton's enquiry over the unrated premises, Ms Dixon advised that they had caught up with 120 of those and they had appointed additional contractors, so they were confident of catching up with the rest. Ms Dixon also advised of a huge churn in change of ownerships of businesses which created a great amount of work each month, but they were hopeful that the additional staff to be taken on would help keep on top of this.

Councillor M. Dixon enquired as to the procedure if operators did not cooperate and were not there to open up for an inspection/visit. Ms Dixon informed the committee that all visits were unannounced, and it was not often Officers were unable to gain access to the premises.

Having fully considered the report, the Chairman thanked Ms Dixon for her attendance.

2. RESOLVED that the Committee commended the hard work of the staff during the year and supported the Cabinet's recommendation to submit the Feed and Food Controls Service Plan for 2019/2020 to Council for final approval.

Reference from Cabinet – 14 January 2020
Adoption of Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the views of the Committee on a report considered by Cabinet on the 14 January 2020 which sought approval to recommend to Council to adopt the Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033 (the Plan)

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Louise Sloan, Strategic Plans and Housing Manager and Mr Gary Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report, highlighting the key points arising and addressing questions and comments thereon.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that it was generally agreed that everyone wanted empty houses/properties to be occupied and enquired if there was any further idea on how to achieve this and the procedures we intend to use. Ms Sloan advised that this was not their area and would come under the Housing Team's remit so she wouldn't like to comment on this regard.

With regard to Councillor M. Dixon's queries Ms Sloan advised that the plan was to encourage the use of more non traditional designs in housing/materials and in relation to the Civic Centre, the Core Strategy was a very strategic document so it would be the second part of the document which would look at particular sites.

Councillor M. Dixon wished to thank the Officers for the plan as a lot of work had gone into this which they should be congratulated on.

Councillor Jackson enquired if officers could highlight any changes made in the plan in relation to houses of multiple occupation. Ms Sloan advised that there hadn't really been any changes in this regard, the evidence was being looked at and a scoping report would come to Committee in future.

Councillor Blackburn referred to Page 38 of the agenda and paragraph 4.2 – Ensuring that policies and proposals for gypsies and travellers are positively prepared, effective and consistent with national policy. Councillor Blackburn queried if anything had changed with regard to this. Mr Baker advised that the Inspector had made a slight change in criteria and a map on Housing growth areas was to be included also.

Councillor Blackburn also queried how the Inspectors main change of ensuring that the extent of Settlement Breaks is positively prepared and justified were to be achieved. Ms Sloan advised that boundaries had now been established and re-designated which would be very difficult to encroach upon.

Councillor Blackett referred to Full Council's notice of motion to declare a climate emergency and enquired if the Plan was not able to respond to this as it had been published before the motion was put forward. Ms Sloan advised that the plan had climate change embedded and entwined into a lot of policies to be as sustainable as we could be however there was the possibility we may need stronger policies in the future relating to the Climate Emergency.

Having fully considered the report the Chairman thanked Ms Sloan and Mr Baker for their attendance and wished to thank all officers involved for their hard work on the Plan.

3. RESOLVED that the Committee supported the recommendations of the report and thanked officers for all the work involved in the preparation of the Plan.

Annual Work Programme 2019-20

The Director of People, Communications and Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out the current work programme of the Committee for the 2019-20 Municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report for Members information and advised of the request for the Major Events Report to be rescheduled to the March meeting so that the economic effect of the Illuminations could be included in the report.

Councillor Jackson requested that the Council Homeless Policy be considered. Mr Diamond advised that he would request this be included within the Housing Strategy Update that was scheduled for consideration at the February Committee meeting.

4. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme for 2019-2020 be noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Director of People, Communications and Partnerships submitted a report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from 16th December, 2019 (copies circulated).

(For copy report and notice – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to contact him if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

In response to Councillor Blackett's request, Mr Diamond advised that he would enquire as to the progress of Item no 190114/325 – To procure a contractor to undertake works at Jacky Whites Market and associated properties in The Bridges Shopping Centre.

5. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) D. TURNER,
Chairman.